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ABSTRACT

This booklet examines the definition of the term "empowerment" according to academics and policymakers and the relevance of empowerment to achieving social inclusion at the national and European Union levels. The findings of a study of the theory and practice of empowerment in five Integra projects in Ireland are reviewed and used to create a framework for linking the diverse definitions of empowerment to different concepts of citizenship and the microprocesses of project design and implementation. The following are among the issues emphasized: (1) the benefits and limitations of the positivist, interpretive, and critical approaches to policymaking and citizenship; (2) problems of the social partnership model; (3) strategies for moving toward a common society and citizenship; (4) the relevance of empowerment to achieving inclusion; and (5) putting empowerment into practice. The booklet's main conclusion is that the practice of empowerment in the projects examined is influenced by the following factors: project managers' disciplinary backgrounds; the constraints of operating within the time scale and objectives of the Integra initiative; the nature of the promoting organizations; and the circumstances and needs of projects' target groups. (The bibliography contains 18 references. The following items are appended: 13 tables; 2 charts; and descriptions of the 5 Integra projects.) (MN)

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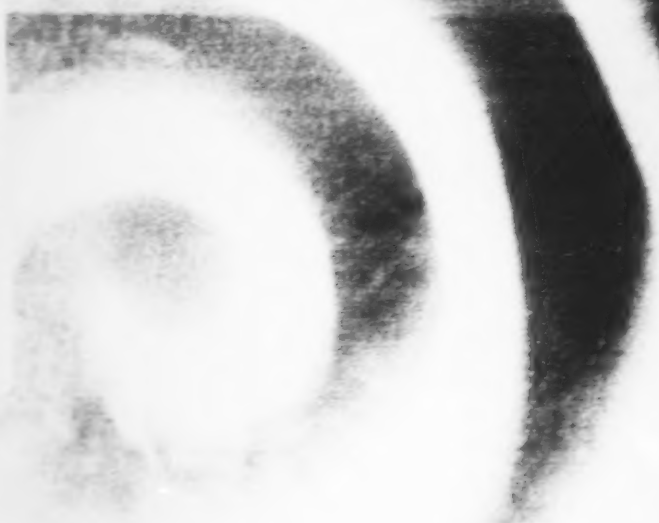

Achieving Inclusion

The Role of Empowerment in Policy and Practice

Maurice Tracy
Tom Ronayne

CE 080 805

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ACHIEVING INCLUSION

THE ROLE OF EMPOWERMENT IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

AIM

The two basic questions that have provided the impetus for this booklet are *what is empowerment?* and, *what is the relevance of empowerment to achieving social inclusion?* These two questions arose in a variety of different ways during the implementation of the Integra strand of the European Union's EMPLOYMENT Initiative in Ireland over the period 1997 to 2000.

This booklet builds and expands on discussions of the above two questions at national and European Union levels. Central to these discussions was the search for clarity regarding *what* empowerment is and *how* empowerment might be used as a strategy to achieve social inclusion. A feature of the discussions to which this booklet seeks to respond is the very diverse understandings of empowerment found among academics, professionals engaged in policy-making, managers of Integra projects, and participants in Integra projects.

This booklet presents a framework within which to consider the diverse understandings of empowerment and shows how they can be linked to different concepts of citizenship and to the micro-processes of project design and implementation. Building on a research study of empowerment as understood and practised in five Integra projects in Ireland, this booklet also seeks to show the links between different understandings of empowerment and how these understandings are put into practice and ultimately experienced by project participants.

INTEGRA AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In May 1996 the Commission of the European Communities introduced Integra as a strand of the EMPLOYMENT Initiative. The aim of Integra was to respond to the persistence and prevalence of social exclusion, especially exclusion from the labour market. During the period 1997 to 2000, 30 projects were implemented in Ireland under Integra with funding from the European Social Fund.

A central aim of Integra was to pilot projects with a capacity to identify and respond to the many causes and consequences of social exclusion. Projects in Integra sought to actively involve people experiencing social exclusion in their operations. Also, projects in Integra sought to secure the involvement of relevant actors and agencies in co-ordinated action at a local level. In the jargon, projects sought to be innovative, bottom-up and integrated responses to social exclusion.

Social exclusion and poverty are not the same thing. Poverty is a relevant factor, but it is not the only cause or consequence of social exclusion. The lack of access to social protection and services and the effective loss or denial of the opportunity to exercise social and political rights are also central to understanding both the causes of social exclusion and to developing polices to achieve social inclusion.

A common factor in the lives of people experiencing social exclusion is that their voices go unheard and unheeded. Also, there is the lack of opportunity and capacity to exercise decision-making power - whether this power is in respect of aspects of day-to-day life or in respect of the shaping of society's goals and institutions. It is this that leads most directly to social, political and psychological isolation - to powerlessness in a civil and political sense. Effectively, socially excluded people are denied a share in the common citizenship of the state.

THE THEMATIC APPROACH AT EU AND NATIONAL LEVELS

To capture the lessons arising from the implementation of projects in EMPLOYMENT (and ADAPT, which was a parallel initiative to EMPLOYMENT) across the European Union, nine themes were identified. A Thematic Working Group (TWG) was established on each theme with the task of identifying the lessons for policy and practice arising. One of the themes selected was *Empowering the Excluded*.

As part of the response to this development, and as a means of identifying the lessons arising from the implementation of projects in Ireland, an empowerment working group of five projects that were specifically interested in this theme was established in 1999. The experiences and views of the project managers and participants in these five projects have been a vital resource in preparing this booklet.

EXPLORING EMPOWERMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

The first task addressed in this booklet is establishing a framework within which to consider the diverse approaches to empowerment and to examine its relevance to achieving social inclusion. Three perspectives on social action, policy development and citizenship are considered. These perspectives are the *Positivist*, the *Interpretive*, and the *Critical*. These three perspectives provide the context for examining the policy-making process (in particular, the role of people experiencing social exclusion within this process), empowerment, and the level of citizenship available as a result of different approaches to policy-making. Following the presentation of the framework linking concepts of empowerment with those of citizenship, the

examination of the concept and practice of empowerment continues by looking more directly at what is meant by empowerment and how it is defined in a number of disciplines.

In order to examine the practice of empowerment, a research study was undertaken involving the five projects that were members of the empowerment working group. The study involved undertaking in-depth interviews with the five project managers, a survey of project participants, and five focus groups sessions with project participants. The collective experience of the five projects was then analysed to examine project development, project implementation and the transition from ideal concepts to pragmatic practice in relation to using empowerment as a strategy to achieve social inclusion.

ARGUMENT

Based on the results of the investigations presented in this booklet, it is argued that policies seeking to achieve social inclusion will only be successful it they place people experiencing exclusion at the centre of the policy-making process. For this to happen it is necessary that people experiencing social exclusion are the subject of policy and not just the objects of policy. This involves recognising that the knowledge and experiences of people experiencing social exclusion are an essential component of the policy-making process. This, in turn, requires that people experiencing social exclusion are actively involved in every stage of the policy process and are not simply 'consulted'. The Integra projects have demonstrated that when the experience and voice of people experiencing social exclusion are valued, heard and acted upon, the results can and do generate both personal and social change.

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING EMPOWERMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON POLICY-MAKING AND CITIZENSHIP

The essential elements of the framework used to examine the links between approaches to policy-making and concepts of citizenship are illustrated in Figure 1. Each of the perspectives presented in this framework is associated with a particular underlying motivation on the part of people adopting it. This motivation, in turn, is linked to a particular concept of citizenship.

The first perspective is the positivist or what is sometimes called the scientifically based approach to policy-making. The underlying motivation for taking action in this perspective is the control or containment of socially excluded groups. It is characterised by the view that only certain forms of knowledge are valid for the policy-making process and that only certain people - people trained in the methodology of positivist science - are capable of generating this knowledge. In this perspective people experiencing social exclusion are the objects of scientific investigation and of the associated policies based on such investigations. The result of this is that people experiencing exclusion play no part in the determination of policy and consequently can only experience a limited form of citizenship.

Theoretical Approach	Underlying Motivation	Type of Citizenship Achievable
Positivist	Containment	Limited Citizenship
Interpretive	Communication	Negotiated Citizenship
Critical	Emancipation	Common Citizenship

FIGURE 1: THREE PERSPECTIVES ON POLICY-MAKING AND CITIZENSHIP

The second perspective is the interpretive. The underlying motivation in this perspective is communication and enhanced understanding. In this perspective an attempt is made to make contact at a more direct and interpersonal level with people experiencing social exclusion and to establish a dialogue between professionals and policy-makers, on the one hand, and the excluded group or individual, on the other. This perspective recognises the need for problems and solutions to be framed on the basis of the development of mutual understandings and agreements. In institutional terms, this perspective also recognises the right of people experiencing social

exclusion to be involved in decisions regarding policy actions aimed at securing their inclusion. The outcome is negotiated citizenship. In this, actions to achieve social inclusion may involve people who are excluded or, as is more typically the case, organisations representing groups of people experiencing social exclusion.

The third perspective - the critical perspective - has emancipation as its core motivation. This perspective places excluded people at the centre of the policy-making process and emphasises the essentially political nature of policy-making and the role of power in shaping social institutions and policy actions. In this perspective policies to achieve social inclusion are determined and underpinned by the direct involvement of people experiencing exclusion in the process of policy determination. The result is a common society in which all persons have access to a common citizenship.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE POSITIVIST PERSPECTIVE ON POLICIES TO ACHIEVE INCLUSION

The formulation of social policy - and public policy in general - is often presented as being 'scientifically based'. In this way, policy decisions are presented and legitimised on the basis that they have been taken in response to an objective assessment of the needs of people experiencing social exclusion by external 'experts' concerned with making the most efficient use of resources to address these needs. This is referred to as the positivist approach to policy-making. However, efficiency is unsatisfactory as the basis for policy as efficiency is usually measured against some pre-existing benchmark, which means that the policy comes into being with pre-set values. Decisions have also to be made as to how to measure efficiency, what are the units of measure to be used? Will they be standard ones that are easy to measure such as - the money required to fund the policy, the number of people needed to administer it, how long it will take? Or, will it include those things rarely measured such as the possible human cost of a policy, the real benefit to the target group at which it is aimed, and the benefits gained by included groups not targeted by the policy? In other words a value judgement has to be made, not a strictly 'scientific' one.

The positivist approach to generating information relevant to policy-making makes considerable use of quantitative research methods. Information is compiled from statistical data available from national surveys, institutional records, and special studies of particular social problems or groups. The criticism here is not that this information is in any way irrelevant but rather that it is incomplete and limited. It may be broad in scope but it lacks the necessary depth required for insight into the reality of the experiences and views of potential policy recipients. The danger is that the results produced by such a research method will only reflect the 'scientifically based' views of

outside experts only serving to further undervalue the expertise of people most familiar with the situation faced by excluded groups, the excluded themselves. In short, it denies people experiencing social exclusion a voice in decisions regarding policies designed to impact on their lives.

In order for there to be common citizenship there must be the opportunity for participation in the determination of policy. This requires that there must be the opportunity to take part in political life and to play an active role in the framing of laws and policies that directly affect all citizens' lives. Too often excluded groups are referred to as not participating in social and political life when in fact they are not afforded the opportunity to participate. What is not recognised in this position is the range of structural, institutional, political and personal barriers preventing participation. The possibility of clear, open and two-way communication is vital for participation. It is this process of dialogue that is denied in the positivist perspective. People experiencing social exclusion are effectively silenced so that not only are their voices unheard but the legitimacy, indeed the existence, of those voices is often denied.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVE FOR POLICIES TO ACHIEVE INCLUSION

Including people experiencing social exclusion in the policy-making process ensures that they are seen as subjects in action rather than as the objects of action. This is an essential feature of what is referred to as the interpretive perspective on policy-making. In this approach there is a dialogue, an open discussion between policymaker and policy recipient in a process where all factors, personal, social, institutional, as well as financial, will be considered. Through this dialogue the policymaker will come to understand the policy recipients' actions and the reasons for them in the context of their lives. In other words, this perspective allows actions to be interpreted in the light of lived experiences that are probably outside that of the policymaker's own life.

This process also affords the policymaker an opportunity to confront long held institutional assumptions based on insufficient, invalid or distorted information that had, possibly unwittingly, assumed the dimensions of dogma. For example, that incarceration is an effective solution to crime or that that counselling alone is sufficient to prevent HIV among drug users. The sharing of experiences and views between policymakers, potential policy recipients and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with them, can lead to the development of new perspectives and better or shared understandings of what is required to tackle social exclusion. These new perspectives can lead to a greater appreciation of the life-experiences of people experiencing social exclusion and help policymakers to make better sense of them.

For the most part policymakers and members of excluded groups are located in different social groups. Inclusive policy building processes have the potential to break down the often distorted view people from different social backgrounds have of each other by helping to develop a process of communication between them. It is this process that is important here; merely putting the two groups in a room together would be worse than useless. The transfer of knowledge between the two groups will require that each side learn about themselves first - their self-image, assumptions, values and so on - before attempting to share their understandings of the policy issues in hand and their respective approaches to policy action.

If a policy to reduce social exclusion is to have legitimacy then the information on which it is based must be collected in a way that captures the reality of the lived experience of social exclusion. An important aspect of this process is that the picture drawn up of this reality must be arrived at with the participation of the people who are the intended policy recipients. If all are agreed as to what makes up the reality to be affected by policy they can set relevant baselines and targets that all involved can support, thereby increasing transparency and acceptability. This is not to say that improved communication is sufficient to ensure a reduction in social exclusion; it is simply to recognise that this is an important step in the process.

The interpretive approach has a number of limitations. In order for it to work successfully, the policy development processes it initiates need to be able to change the way people think about themselves and others. For this to occur they would need to be able to tackle strong internal and structural resistance to change. This resistance comes from the attachment that people have to their own ideas even when these ideas are shown to be in doubt, which is one reason why it is so difficult to overcome prejudice. This internal resistance increases when these ideas are held in common with a person's in-group as they reinforce their sense of belongingness and community. This sense of belongingness and community may stem from any number of sources such as: social class, family, profession, work situation, local community, and so on. Unfortunately, the interpretive approach is not very well equipped to overcome internal or structural resistance to change.

A further limitation of the interpretive approach is that, with its emphasis on communication and the reduction of misunderstanding, it has a tendency to offer solutions in terms of changing ways of thinking and processes for decision-making rather than actually changing what is done. It therefore supports current policies rather than supporting the development of alternate ones.

Finally, and crucially, the interpretative perspective fails to directly engage with issues related to the unequal distribution of power between participants

in the policy-making process. In this regard, it ignores the role of the more powerful and included groups in society in shaping the policy agenda and in determining the process of participation of policy-making.

THE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POLICIES TO ACHIEVE INCLUSION

The critical perspective highlights the fact that policy-making is neither value neutral nor unaffected by the existing power relationships between different groups in society. It advocates that in order to satisfy claims to democratic decision-making, space must be made for the excluded to articulate their needs as defined by them and the policy-making process must afford real possibilities for people experiencing social exclusion to exercise their voice in policy determination. Promoting social inclusion through an inclusive process of communication involving all the appropriate people is not enough unless appropriate and effective action results.

Working with the best social theory is important when developing policy but it is also important that there is no gap between theory and practice. In fact the means for action are an essential part of the process and should be developed during the exploratory stage so that effective actions, means, and targets follow. If this does not happen then the real danger is that bureaucratic pragmatism will take over at the action stage resulting in an inadequate policy outcome, disillusion for the people involved, and disrepute for the methodology.

The critical perspective includes what is termed the felt needs of the excluded group: that is, their needs as they see them. It does not simply reflect an understanding of their normative needs: that is, their needs as determined by professional 'experts' or indeed by policymakers, no matter how well intentioned.

Having established the felt needs of the excluded group the critical approach then produces an analysis of these felt needs that focuses on revealing the root causes of the problems that people experiencing social exclusion have been facilitated or helped to voice. It is this revelation, as it were, of how their day-to-day struggles have hidden from them the root causes and the real contexts of their felt needs that enables the development of more relevant and coherent social and political action. The critical approach uncovers the underlying structural causes as to why these needs are not being satisfied and shows possible ways that these structural causes can be overcome.

The process of change calls for action on three levels. First, empowerment strategies will have to be developed for and by the excluded at individual, group and community level. This is to facilitate the growth of self-awareness,

self-worth, needs articulation, solidarity and so on in order to ensure that they are afforded the opportunity to take part in and guide the change process. Second, policymakers also require a process of empowerment to rediscover / redefine their own values, to place policy values in perspective, and to learn about the reality of the lives of people with whom they will be designing policy. Third, the ground must be prepared for the necessary structural changes that will be required if exclusion is to be reduced.

LIMITING CITIZENSHIP

It is, almost casually, assumed that citizenship is available to all as of right. However, citizenship rights are not universal when examined in the light of rights and means. Although people have civil rights that are to a greater or lessor extent 'enshrined in law' the means to exercise these rights is not. Citizenship consists of two sets of complimentary rights, that is, civil rights and social rights. Civil rights include both legal and political rights such as the right to vote, to join political parties of choice, to a fair trial and so on. However, having a right in law is one thing, having the necessary resources to action those rights is another. Social rights are those rights that ensure that all people have the means to exercise their civil rights. Inadequate education, lack of consultation, lack of access to resources, and so on will mean that many people will be denied the opportunity to participate either meaningfully or fully in the common society which they share with other citizens. Social exclusion is the lack of opportunity to participate in mainstream society due to the lack of the financial, social, psychological, political or educational resources available to the majority of the population.

Social rights, by their very nature, are harder to legislate for than civil rights and access to them is even harder to ensure. In fact social rights are rarely stated as rights at all but are presented (if at all) in the language of welfare regulations that are spread over many different government departments, statutory bodies, local authorities and so on. This is a serious problem as the achievement of social rights depends on the state's willingness to redistribute resources that the 'market' is unable or unwilling to do.

Social exclusion involves the limiting of citizenship by denying certain categories of citizen, by whatever means, equal social rights. This denial is claimed to be due to the 'blind hand' of structural inequalities or market forces. However, the lack of any widespread attempts at emancipatory or inclusive solutions show that it is an issue of values or, more accurately, a lack of common values and of institutions to underpin these common values.

This is illustrated by successive Irish government policies towards the Travelling Community. These policies have consisted of attempts at assimilation that are based on an insistence that the Traveller lifestyle is

somehow unjustifiably different. Little attempt is made to understand or appreciate the value that Travellers themselves place in their own culture and way of life or to include the impact this group valuing should have on policy.

This determination to incorporate excluded groups into mainstream society is based also on the assumption by mainstream society that it is so inclusive that it has no need to change. In this process, mainstream society accuses excluded individuals (and groups) of excluding themselves from society rather than recognising that people are excluded by mainstream society as a result of being denied the opportunity to exercise their full and equal citizenship. Moreover, there is a failure by mainstream society to recognise that many excluded people may not wish for incorporation into a society that is intolerant in nature without first having that nature change to one that values diversity and solidarity.

PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Attempts to tackle social exclusion have tended to concentrate on making minor structural changes in a limited and piecemeal manner. In recent years Ireland has taken a social partnership approach to policy and budgetary issues. A further refinement of this process has seen the inclusion of non-governmental organisations working in the social sphere. This, at first, appears to give an opportunity for the voices of the excluded to be heard and action on their behalf to be included in national policy-making fora and policy actions. However, differences in the amount of power and influence between the 'partners' means that the needs of the strongest will be satisfied first.

There is a sense that by including 'representatives' (mainly not members of the excluded group) of the excluded in the process of national consultation the state is hoping that demands for inclusion may be contained and that its actions in this regard will be legitimated. Although consultation processes of this type have value – for example, increased mutual understanding of public issues - they are still based in a society where there are extreme imbalances in access to real power and influence and where structural factors are weighted so strongly against the excluded. In terms of the framework linking policy-making to concepts of citizenship the type of citizenship afforded to people experiencing exclusion in this approach is negotiated citizenship.

It is also the case that in the framing of the policy context and agenda there is an emphasis on preserving the status quo and thereby perpetuating deep rooted inequalities in resources and power that result in unequal citizenship. In these circumstances citizenship becomes an even bigger problem for the excluded as well as for society in general. A sense of common citizenship has the potential to increase social solidarity and to reduce feelings of

alienation. However, common citizenship can only come about where there is a real sense of shared participation and inclusiveness and in the presence of institutions and policies that effectively eliminate and prevent systematic inequalities of power and resources.

TOWARDS A COMMON SOCIETY AND CITIZENSHIP

If the will can be found to promote social rights, solidarity, equality and inclusiveness to a higher level of priority, then a common society to which all have access as citizens may be developed. The key to this more inclusive society will be in how inclusive its definitions are of who is a citizen as a counter to the present exclusionist ideas constructed around the narrow view that a citizen is a person with current productive worth to society. It is necessary for society to recognise that it is not for the excluded to assimilate but rather for society to change so that the values and aspirations of the excluded are given equal status. What is needed is the development of a different kind of society where civil and social rights are actively promoted and where a common citizenship is available to and shared by all.

CONSTRUCTING EMPOWERMENT

The written output of academics is one of the main sources for concepts of empowerment. Policymakers and people involved in designing and running projects to tackle social exclusion get their professional qualifications in universities and colleges - from academics - and then go on to gain experience through their own work. Academics themselves learn from other academics and from the now experienced professionals. Academics and professionals study and work in different disciplines or areas of study. Each of these disciplines has different ideas about exclusion and empowerment. These disciplines, in turn, shape the concept and practice of empowerment of the professionals trained within them. It is therefore important to be familiar with what different disciplines have to say about empowerment and exclusion. The following summaries of a number of different disciplinary perspectives on empowerment serve as an illustration of this.

Medical: In their article on the treatment of diabetes through a strategy of patient empowerment, Feste and Anderson (1995) state that it is patients themselves who achieve improved treatment management through the exercise of their own power. Medical staff should be there only to help, guide and encourage the process of empowerment. Empowerment is largely accomplished by individuals themselves, but the process can be facilitated by healthcare professionals: *personal empowerment is promoted by encouraging people to identify their values, needs, and goals and the resources they have to solve problems and achieve goals* (p. 142).

The key words here are facilitated and promoted. A medical patient is in an extremely disempowered position, with actions being taken and decisions about their person being made usually without informed agreement and not always in what a person might consider their best interests. People are generally placed in a position of being regarded as non-competent and therefore decisions are often made on their behalf and imposed without consultation, a situation very familiar to anyone experiencing social exclusion in his or her life. The idea that action to alleviate might be taken on the basis of collaboration, through facilitation or promotion of the individual's own ideas / concepts / experiences is as unusual in the social sphere as it is in the medical.

Third World Development: In discussing empowerment as a strategy in Third World Development, Singh and Titi (1995) emphasise the importance of the participation of people experiencing social exclusion in the process of policy development. They point to the value of participatory research in which the researched collaborate fully in the research process. They highlight the distinction between: *statist approaches (that is, the state, policymakers,*

researchers, etc. will provide development solutions to the poor) (and) *people-centred approaches which recognise poor people's knowledge base and capacities to initiate change* (p. 22). The latter approach recognises people experiencing social exclusion as competent actors in the design of development strategies rather than as helpless victims with no useful assets with which to help themselves. They also point to the importance of the social learning approach whereby it is important to learn from the excluded person or group by drawing on their experience and knowledge base: *This approach empowers, on the one hand, the poor by transferring the initiative for action to them and, on the other hand, the enablers* (p. 23). However, they sound a warning that: *the powerful may appear to be conceding power, but they do so in order to manage the powerless. 'Empowerment', therefore, is a contradiction in terms; there can only be 'self empowerment'* (p. 34).

Anthropology: Cheater (1992) makes the important point that words are sometimes given far more power than they might actually legitimately possess:

> *The constantly repeated rhetorics of public policy and institutional practice seem designed to strengthen individual choice within the market, and to weaken dependency, merely by verbal reiteration.* (p. 4)

Words and their meaning(s) are subjective and open to manipulation. Control of words lies with the *representative spokespersons* who not only control precise and inferred meaning but also emotional resonance and impact. This power of words, this ongoing dialogue around empowerment may mask the imbalance in the: *relations of power linking states... and empowerers to poor people lacking resources ... and thereby render the already vulnerable even less capable of defending their self-identified interests* (p. 6).

In defining empowerment, Cheater (1999) explores the concept of power itself. In this search, she looks to Foucault who makes the point that not only are individuals the exercisers and targets of power but they are also the conduits of power. In doing this, she points to the difficulty of maintaining negotiation when you are dependent on the other protagonist, as when the excluded attempt to re-negotiate their status with the state. In the context of this negotiation with the state it is important to note that, as Marshal (1998) points out, the exercise of power need not be overt but that potentially it is at its most effective when its exercise is covert. On this point he goes on to quote Urry and Wakeford: *in one sense power is most powerful if the actor can, by manipulation, prevent issues from coming to the point of decision at all* (p. 520).

The debate around empowerment must be conducted in as transparent a manner as possible but with an acute awareness on the part of the excluded that their voice may not be heard. For, as Cheater maintains: *in the final analysis, states still stand as both referees and guarantors of such negotiated outcomes, if not of more Machiavellian techniques of self-empowerment whereby rules may simply be subverted ... rather than changed* (1999. p. 8).

Community Development: In their article on *Community Participation and Empowerment*, Craig and Mayo (1995) point out the constraints placed on empowerment strategies by the: *wider requirements of profitability and viability within the increasingly global market* (p. 6). This is despite whatever individual or community gains may be negotiated locally. Another constraint to which they point is that of the subversion of community action organisations through their competing for and obtaining public-sector contracts to provide services. The service contracted will be specified in detail and little or no room will be available for innovation, strategy development or campaigning activities normally associated with community action. The *poacher will have turned game-keeper* with the community organisation working for the state and not with the state.

Shanahan and Ward (1995) point to the dangers of allowing the debate on empowerment to remain at the level of the individual to the exclusion of considering the collective dimensions of empowerment: *Through processes of individualisation, so dominant in contemporary 'developed' society, collective resistance to dominant values, institutions and structures is dissipated* (p. 70). Also, they note that the underlying assumption behind many interventions is that the excluded wish to be included into society as it currently stands. However, Shanahan and Ward assert, many of the 'excluded' do not wish for incorporation but rather: *if given a chance to reflect and act collectively, would want to change that system and "to make it their own" by addressing structural issues of their choice* (p. 72).

Economics: The position of choice is central to economics. The choices that economic actors make determine the outcomes experienced as a result of the particular economic action. In making choices, conventional economics assumes that all choices are based on some variant of rational choice theory. However, as Boulding (1992: 86) points out, humanity is not perfectly, or even mainly, a rational actor. The impact of socialisation, learning, experience and the essential (indeed central) emotional nature of the human actor are, for the most part, ignored.

Economics also tends to ignore what Boulding calls *the problem of identity and community* which is so central to the formation and maintenance of human identity and the implications that this has for the excluded person or

group in their participation in or exclusion from the economic life of society. The degree of pride or shame we feel, and outsiders display towards our identity, personal and/or group, affects our activities including our economic activity. In discussing the alienation that can spring from felt or experienced shame Boulding points to the useful counter to this that can spring from a form of pride which he terms: *'disalienation', that is, a sense of identification with community and satisfaction in one's role in it* (1992: 93).

EMPOWERMENT AND POWER

The great imbalance in power between people experiencing social exclusion and the state is emphasised in critical social theory and in various perspectives on community development. People experiencing social exclusion are kept dependent on the state as it controls policy-making, money and words. Policymakers behave as if constantly repeating inclusive phrases will somehow be enough to make social exclusion go away. This power of words is also used to mask the nature and extent of the imbalance in the power relations between the state and the included, on the one hand, and people experiencing exclusion, on the other. This is not to lose sight of the importance of the internal power relationships in any project or community organisation that might become involved in actions to promote social inclusion. In particular, who has the power to decide and influence policy and set action? Is it the professionals that might become involved or do the policy recipients or project participants have a voice? In the context of empowerment projects, this is important for inclusiveness, empowerment strategies and for setting project parameters.

Expert knowledge is recognised as valuable but the narrow definition of 'expert' that is used does not include the excluded. If the direct knowledge of the excluded is ignored, distorted or played down then the policies and projects that result, no matter how well intentioned, will not reduce exclusion or indeed may only serve to increase it. The approach to

Theoretical Approach	Underlying Motivation	Empowerment Approach	Type of Citizenship Achievable
Positivist	Containment	Imposed	Limited Citizenship
Interpretive	Communication	Gifted	Negotiated Citizenship
Critical	Emancipation	Facilitated	Common Citizenship

FIGURE 2: APPROACHES TO EMPOWERMENT AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CITIZENSHIP

empowerment that is taken when social policies and projects are designed and implemented will greatly affect the level of citizenship achieved *(see Figure 2)*. In this context there are three possible approaches to empowerment and associated power relationships:

- imposed - power can be used to impose a solution from outside using nominal empowerment strategies;
- gifted - some power can be given as a gift after a process of negotiation that uses limited empowerment strategies; and,
- facilitated - the excluded individual or group are facilitated or helped to develop and use power for themselves through inclusive empowerment strategies.

The state and its organisations hold authority to make policies to deal with various social issues. If the state takes the positivist approach to policy-making the resulting policy will be imposed on the policy recipients who will then have access to limited citizenship only. Therefore, the approach to empowerment being taken is one that sees it as something to be used to impose solutions. In this approach, power is held over or on behalf of people experiencing social exclusion by the "expert" and the included.

However, the distribution of power in society is neither a zero-sum situation nor fixed in time. Power is contested. In the sphere of social and economic policy social activists, communities and individuals struggle to gain power and exercise it to shape policies consistent with the social and economic reality in which they live. Increasingly, people experiencing social exclusion and organisations representing them are trying to negotiate with the state in an attempt to develop more effective and inclusive policies. However, the type and amount of power open to negotiators depends on their relative positions to each other and this is always decided by those 'in power', therefore whatever power is conceded is given or gifted by the state. The excluded are engaged in a process of communication that feels empowering because someone is listening at last. However, they are now confined to a process of negotiation and re-negotiation at each stage of the policy process. The resultant level of citizenship achievable is negotiated or contingent citizenship; that is, it is conditional, subject to or dependent on circumstances that are under the control of the giver. The approach to power taken here is one that sees it as a gift to be given by the state after a process of consultation with the excluded.

If a critical perspective is taken to policy-making then the approach to empowerment used is one in which excluded people are facilitated to develop and use power. In this way a more radical and inclusive strategy can be developed for the establishment of a common citizenship by working with excluded people to achieve emancipation and social inclusion. The

alternate is to continue to impose a limited citizenship with the result that social exclusion will persist.

UNHEARD VOICES

As argued above, the voices of the excluded may be represented but they go unheard or unheeded. Moreover, their direct knowledge is rarely collected and their insights into empowerment and inclusion strategies are being lost. Figure 3 illustrates the present process of building concepts of empowerment.

Academics and policy professionals develop concepts and strategies about empowerment and exclusion through studying the work of other academics and policy professionals, from their own research, and from the experiences of working or practice professionals. The scientific or objective knowledge developed is generally confined to the discipline or area of study in which they trained and are now currently working. The ideas developed are therefore more likely to be concentrated in or confined to the context of that particular discipline. This knowledge is passed on to students who go on to become professionals and to other academics and professionals through their writing.

Practice professionals working for the state or for non-governmental organisations develop policy or provide direct services to policy recipients such as excluded individuals or groups. These professionals gain experience from working in these areas and this mediated knowledge is passed back to academics by attending conferences, writing papers or articles and so on. Mediated knowledge often involves the interpretive approach and the professionals involved are seen as the conveyers and interpreters of knowledge between academics / policy professionals and policy recipients. As professionals generally train and work in one discipline their concepts and practices of empowerment and exclusion will be limited to or greatly influenced by that discipline.

Policy recipients / project participants receive services from professionals or are directly affected by policies that other professionals develop. They pass through the services developed or provided by professionals largely anonymously with little or no direct impact on these policies except as serviced units. What little of their knowledge and experience that is collected is interpreted by the professionals involved and becomes part of their knowledge. The direct knowledge of the excluded is rarely collected and so is largely lost. Direct knowledge comes from the experience and expertise of people experiencing social exclusion. Its collection, interpretation, presentation and so on can be facilitated by various professionals from either state or non-governmental organisations. Since policy recipients are not

FIGURE 3: THE CURRENT CONCEPT AND STRATEGY BUILDING PROCESS

confined by the restrictions of an academic discipline their direct knowledge and experience will be broad, rich and current and as such is a resource of value.

CONCLUSION

Policies developed without the input of the excluded and imposed on them through the power of the state have failed to promote social inclusion and only serve to maintain limited citizenship or, at best, achieve negotiated citizenship. It is necessary, therefore, that excluded people are facilitated at individual and group levels to develop and use power for themselves through empowerment strategies to develop inclusive policies that will lead to the establishment of common citizenship.

The process to develop both an understanding of social exclusion and a concept and practice of empowerment must be truly emancipatory or liberating. Therefore, the three types of knowledge that are available must be recognised and combined in an inclusive process. The three types of knowledge are:

- scientific or so called objective knowledge that comes from the different disciplines and areas of study and from collecting the work experiences of professionals;
- mediated knowledge that comes from the training practice-professionals receive from the academic discipline they study in and from the experience they gain from working with the issue of social exclusion. They then interpret and convey the knowledge and experience gained; and,
- direct knowledge that comes from the experience and expertise of the excluded themselves.

The concepts and ideas of exclusion and empowerment that are used must have this direct knowledge at their heart with the other two types of knowledge supporting and facilitating the process in order to promote social inclusion. Care must be taken to ensure that the direct knowledge of people experiencing social exclusion is directly articulated by themselves and not solely by organisations who may be working with excluded people or activists and sympathetic professionals no matter how well intentioned. Otherwise there is a danger that the 'knowledge' that is collected will reflect what the professionals / activists think is best rather than what the excluded think.

INVESTIGATING EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

COLLECTING THE KNOWLEDGES

The mediated and direct knowledges of empowerment were collected through a study designed to gather information from project staff and participants involved in five Integra projects that were using empowerment strategies. Participation in the study was voluntary and assurances were given that the information collected would be confidential and that no individual would be identified. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used; that is, questionnaires and individual and group interviews were used. Both methods were used so that the best points of each could be realised and to overcome some of the weaknesses of each. The study was completed in stages and each stage was used to improve and inform the next one.

THE SAMPLE

The study was designed as an exploration of the concept and practice of empowerment. Information was collected from Integra project staff and participants. Each group represented the mediated and direct knowledges of empowerment, respectively. Each of the projects participating had expressed an interest in or a commitment to using empowerment strategies in their project. In each project the project manager and as many participants as were willing to participate in the study were surveyed. The later figure came to 43 out of a possible total of 99 (see Table 1 in Annex 1).

Almost 75 percent of the participants surveyed were women (see Table 2 in Annex 1). The clear imbalance in the numbers of men and women in the projects is even more striking as one of the five projects had, intentionally, all male participants. The five project mangers interviewed were women, as were the greater majority of staff members. In three projects all staff members were women.

THE STUDY QUESTIONS

The questions used to explore the concept and practice of empowerment were based on the academic writings reviewed in the previous chapter and were similar for both staff and participants. The quantitative part of the study involved a survey of participants in the five projects. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that had two sections. The first section collected personal information on each participant so as to create a profile of people experiencing social exclusion and the experiences or circumstances that they might have in common. The second section was designed to measure participants' feelings about being a part of their project, for example:

- did they feel that their project worked in an empowering way?
- did they feel that they were personally empowered by being part of their project?
- did this feeling of empowerment go with them outside the project?
- did they feel that taking part in the project increased their chances of getting a job?

The qualitative part of the survey was in two parts and comprised one-to-one interviews with the five project managers and a series of focus group sessions with groups of participants in each project. The information collected in the survey was analysed as the survey was being done. This allowed for the early analysis of the information collected by the questionnaires and this was used to show what areas to concentrate on in the focus group sessions. Figure 4 shows the types of information collected from the two groups, project staff and project participants, and how this information was collected.

Group	Information Type	How collected
Project Staff	Concepts and Practices	One-to-one Interviews
Project Participants	Participant Profile/Description	Questionnaire
Project Participants	Concepts and Experiences	Focus Group Interviews and Questionnaire

FIGURE 4: INFORMATION SOURCES AND METHODS OF COLLECTION

PROJECT STAFF - CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES OF EMPOWERMENT

The five project managers interviewed come from a variety of backgrounds that can be loosely described as:

Social Worker
Community Development Worker
Target Group Activist
Educationalist
Overseas Development Worker

Each took a different approach to empowerment and therefore to both the design and operation of their projects. The approaches taken could be broadly identified with the discipline or area of study in which they had either

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been trained or worked. The interviews followed a set number of questions that explored the following areas:

Project Development	how did the project come about and how were the needs of participants assessed?
Process or State	what view did they have of empowerment?
Output or Outcome	what was the project's main focus, personal and social development / change or accreditation, products or throughput?
Intervention Short Circuits	did the project reach the most vulnerable people and are changes limited to the individual level in the project?

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Figure 5 shows three models for the development of projects of the type found in the Integra programme. These models include four aspects of project development:

- setting the project aim and objectives
- deciding the actions to be taken to achieve these objectives
- the dominant knowledge consulted during project development
- the project focus on output or outcome.

Project Objective	Project Action	Dominant Knowledge Consulted in Project Design Phase	Dominant Project Focus
Employability	Vocational Training	Objective	Output
Employability	Vocational Training	Mediated	Output
Personal Autonomy	Personal Development		Internal Outcome
Employability	Vocational Training		Output
Personal Autonomy	Personal Development	Direct	Internal Outcome
Social Inclusion	Social Action		External Outcome

FIGURE 5: MODELS OF THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Three types of knowledge are identified. The association between these types of knowledge and personnel potentially involved in project development is as follows:

Scientific or Objective	policy professionals and academics
Mediated	practice or working professionals, project managers, community activists, and voluntary and community organisations
Direct	people experiencing social exclusion (project participants).

The projects came about in two main ways: either by some organisation, either state or non governmental, realising that there was a particular group not being helped by existing services or from lessons that were learned from ongoing work. For the most part it was the professionals working in the area that came up with the ideas, although limited consultation did take place with some excluded individuals or groups. Identification of the target groups was mostly in the hands of the professionals involved and came from their own ideas or from working with other agencies such as FÁS, the Irish state training and employment authority:

> *[The parent] project management committee is made up of FÁS and [other state agencies involved] ...the push...came from them. Particularly from FÁS and [one other state service], the two representatives I think were the main authors of the action plan, I think it would be fair to say.*

The felt needs of the excluded group, that is their needs as assessed and expressed by themselves, were not collected before or during the development, design or setting up of the majority of the projects:

> *We went out to all the employment services people, we went out to [social workers], we went to the employment exchanges we consulted and negotiated or whatever you like to call it with the jobs facilitators in the exchange. ... We didn't do any needs analysis with any of those [target group members]. We took our information from what we heard outside and from our own experience in here [within sponsoring organisation].*

Therefore, the project development process, for the most part, tended to follow the concept and strategy building process model (see Figure 3) associated with the positivist perspective as only scientific / objective and mediated knowledge was used (see Figure 5). However, a minority of projects took a more interpretive approach that gave potential participants more choice and was aimed at achieving participant led projects:

...induction involved group work looking at hopes and fears...that kind of thing...from the first two weeks onward it was a blank page, with work initially to get people to be able to say what they wanted as a group and individually.

Other professionals felt the need: *to be challenged in our way of working* by taking on an unserviced group and some saw the need to redress some of the imbalance in the provision of services to excluded groups and so to move towards social action through accessing participants' direct knowledge:

...trying to, as there were very little services, negotiate specifically on behalf of those people...knowing that there were issues of equity around that.

The general view of the professionals interviewed is that empowerment is a process and not a state: *...something that you do, it's not something that you can transfer.* This process can be one where action takes place at the personal level through which excluded people improve their self-esteem and confidence as a result of actions negotiated between the professionals and the participants. However, in the lives of people experiencing social exclusion the building of self-esteem and confidence is not enough to overcome the structural inequalities that confine their lives and limit their citizenship. This becomes especially clear when they try to act outside their own community or project. When they meet and interact with the *official world,* that is, with the various state agencies that have come to dominate the lives of the socially excluded, they experience the familiar disempowering structures that have remained unchanged even while they themselves have developed:

...there is a kind of a parallel world in many ways where excluded people live and maybe you could say that they become empowered in that world in many ways...but they are still affected by this other world, the official world that's still there and never goes away.

At its best the empowerment process is one through which excluded people develop to the point where collective action becomes not only possible but inescapable and where this action takes place at the level of wider society. The excluded can then move from being on the margins of society to becoming included in it if they so desire.

OUTPUT OR OUTCOME

Project objectives can vary from improving employability, to increasing personal autonomy and to promoting social inclusion (see Figure 5). Projects can also vary in the emphasis they place on output or outcome.

Project output can be described as a focusing of the project's activities on producing:

- throughput, that is the number of participants passing through the project;
- accreditation, that is gaining recognised educational or skills based qualifications or certificates; and,
- materials or products, that is producing educational materials, information packs, training manuals, and so on.

However, gaining skills or producing materials are not enough in themselves, despite individual gains, to reduce social exclusion:

> *...we have very clear materials which are outputs and they are very tangible. People are very proud of them, because they're real and they are an expression of the process. Even though some people might also be saying, "things are still really difficult". I mean all these things [social problems] are still going on.*

Outcomes both internal and external to the participants are vital if social inclusion is to be promoted. Project outcomes can be described in terms of:

- internal outcome, that is, facilitating self-development at the individual or community level and at inter-project and inter-agency level; and,
- external outcome, that is, facilitating the development of empowerment to the level where the excluded can initiate change processes at the level of wider society.

There was awareness amongst the professionals of the practical realities of the situation:

> *We evaluate our programme all the time...to ensure we have an outcome. We don't always have it. We always have an output though.*

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Project size will affect empowerment outcomes. Small projects are needed to achieve the level of individual attention required of an effective empowerment strategy. The danger in creating larger projects is that they will tend to produce output at the expense of achieving outcome. Expansion might be possible given adequate staff and finance but what is most important is the ethos of the project, the basic genuine valuing of the input of each participant and the importance of having basic respect for the individual:

But I think the important thing is the way of working, of being client centred, of recognising that each individual is the expert on themselves, has the right to determine for themselves what they want, what their needs are.

The ongoing project processes will reflect and follow on from the project development model used to design the project. Some projects set more rigorous rules than others regarding time keeping, attendance and so on, in keeping with the training ethos of the project. Other projects set a basic set of rules that were modified or added to as necessary following ongoing consultations with participants. The type and extent of rules and regulations varied a lot, as did the penalties for breaking them.

The processes by which participants are monitored or assessed internally by the projects have a direct affect on how outcome is achieved and reflect the project focus (see Figure 6). Most projects tried to collect information on how participants felt during the projects. However, the methods used varied greatly.

Mircro Processes of Project	Process of Feedback to Participants	Focus of Change	Context of Outcome
Professionally Determined Rules & Regulations	Professional Assessment	Participant	Participant Responsiveness
Actions Negotiated Through Consultation	Professional - Participant Review	Project & Participant by Mutual Accommodation	Participant Responsiveness Personal Biography & Project Responsiveness
Collective Codetermination[1]	Collective Reflection	Collective Change	Participant Responsiveness Personal Biography & Project Responsiveness Institutional, Policy & Social Responsiveness

[1]Codetermination: to jointly decide, establish, agree on, shape and govern.

FIGURE 6: MODELS OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

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Many projects adopted a mainly positivist approach to monitoring participant progress and providing participants with feedback. This approach included assessment by professionals involving formal testing, unstructured 'chats' and weekly group sessions. In this approach the dominant focus of any corrective action to be taken is by participants. This type of feedback does not allow for the adverse impact of personal histories or biographies to be taken into account, nor indeed inadequacies in project implementation.

Attempts were made by some projects to have action-based feedback through weekly professional-participant reviews either in one-to-one sessions between a participant and a personally assigned staff member or group exchanges between staff and participants that resulted in actions by both parties. The focus here was on mutual change on the part of both the project and the participant but with the emphasis on the participant although account is taken of the participant's personal biography and the direct affect this has on their possible outcomes.

Some project activities were generated on the basis of collective reflection, that is, initiated by a process that was mainly participant led and facilitated by the professionals. The changes involved were focused on the collective, that is, the project as a company of equals sharing ideas, action and responsibility. There was some evidence that external outcome was being achieved at some level by a minority of the projects. The outcome in these limited cases, even if it did not lead to inclusion, at least was to lead to or enhance the opportunity for both personal and social change.

INTERVENTION SHORT CIRCUITS

Intervention short circuits are a very real problem for policy and project design and implementation. Two of the main issues arising in this context being:

- are the most vulnerable people being reached?
- are the changes achieved confined to the individual level in the project?

There was a general concern and acknowledgement among project staff that the most vulnerable people in the target groups were not being reached by the projects and that only those who were the easiest to reach or were most able were being contacted. That is not to say that the people reached by the projects - their participants - were not experiencing exclusion or in need of assistance. The more general point arising here is that policy is often designed and implemented in such a way as to miss the most excluded or vulnerable in society. It is not that the excluded are refusing to participate but rather that they are not being offered realistic opportunities to participate.

Among the barriers to participation noted were literacy difficulties *(filling in forms)*, low levels of confidence, and fear of the unknown. Pre-development and outreach programmes aimed specifically at these issues are needed:

> *...you have a layer of people who are disadvantaged and who are now doubly disadvantaged because they're not getting the opportunity to participate.*

Another real danger is that participants will be selected by projects on the basis of the likelihood that they will produce successful outcomes.

Although the projects may be empowering individual participants, the underlying social, cultural or financial problems of the target group more generally are not being dealt with. The provision of access to state services and especially the co-ordination of inter-agency efforts are crucial to the easing of difficulties and problems on the ground. The extension of empowerment strategies into the state services along with information and anti-discrimination education programmes is also important, as empowering socially excluded people is not enough if they then have to deal with a disempowered, badly informed or inadequately trained public service.

The provision of follow-through activities and supports for participants is important to the success of empowerment interventions. The establishment and maintenance of networks of such people possibly even from different projects would have value for tackling wider community issues. This could also include self-help or counselling groups:

> *...one of these groups is trying to develop a self-help framework for themselves. And some of that came out of what they were saying to us: "We still have support needs. It's not all over. We still have support needs".*

In order to deal with the issue of lack of action on underlying problems there is a need to take a long-term view of projects, interventions, and funding:

> *...the process we're involved in, it's just really slow. ... And that's for the Europeans to recognise as well. A two-year project ain't going to do this.*

PROJECT STAFF – CONCLUSIONS

IDEAL CONCEPTS

In the interviews the ideals that the professionals have for the concept and practice of empowerment are broadly interpretive in approach. However, the projects themselves were planned, established and run on mainly positivist

lines: that is, decisions regarding target group identification, needs assessment and project development were for the most part based on the opinions, expertise and experience of professionals alone. However, most projects once up and running made efforts to involve participants more directly in the running of the projects and to become participant-led.

PRAGMATIC PRACTICE

Four main influences shaped the practice of the professionals when the projects were in operation:

- the ideas and concepts of the discipline in which they were trained;
- the restrictions and difficulties of running a project within an EU funded programme;
- the type of organisation that promoted or sponsored the project; and,
- the particular circumstances and stories of the participants involved.

This is not to say that the concepts that project staff voiced in the interviews have no validity to the professionals. On the contrary, it is clear from their voices that their hopes for the excluded people they worked with are genuine:

> *So through that [a drop-in centre] a number of people came to that first meeting. ... we actually counted up the years in the room [spent] responding to [this] problem. It was a massive amount of years between people who were [professionals] and the people who were living in the community... So it was a mixture of support and talk, a follow-up afterwards ... trying to, as there were very little services, negotiate specifically on behalf of these people to get some kind of service.*

However, there was also a clear recognition among project staff that the long-term effectiveness of projects depends on their engaging with the situation faced by their participants outside the projects. That is, action to address the underlying social and structural factors underpinning exclusion is needed as a necessary complement to their work with individual participants.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS - PROFILE

PROJECT PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Forty-three participants were surveyed with women accounting for 75 percent (see Tables 1 and 2 in Annex 1). Almost 70 percent of participants were under 35 years of age at the time of the survey, just under 70 percent had children and over 60 percent had children living at home with them (for further details see Tables 3, 4 and 5 in Annex 1).

For the most part the projects are reaching a younger age group. The majority of participants had family responsibilities and commitments, that made it difficult for them to participate fully and steadily due to problems such as childcare needs, reduced financial resources and so on. Some projects addressed these issues by providing child-care facilities or support, subsidised transport and so on.

EDUCATIONAL PROFILE

The level of formal educational qualifications achieved prior to joining the projects is uniformly low and varies little across the age groups; most participants (70 percent) left school with no formal qualification (see Table 6 in Annex 1). Two of the causes for these low levels of educational achievement are to be found in the main reasons that participants gave for leaving school (see Figure 1 in Annex 2). The first was to get a job (42 percent), often under pressure from family circumstances. The second was because their experience of school was difficult or negative (33 percent). Only a small number of participants (14 percent) left school when they felt they had completed their education.

PROJECT PARTICIPATION

The reasons that were given in the survey as to why participants joined their projects fell into three categories (see Figure 2 in Annex 2):

- a desire to improve employability (career needs).
- a means of personal enhancement, development, motivation, to get a new start, to find support (life needs); and,
- to obtain training, skills or education for its own sake (education needs).

Although both career development (25 percent) and education and training needs (28 percent) are important to some participants it is clear that life needs, that is the desire for personal growth and development, are the main reasons given for taking part in the projects (47 percent).

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS – THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE PROJECTS

The direct knowledge of the participants was investigated in two ways; through the second part of the questionnaire that was designed to measure people's feelings about being a part of their project; and through the focus group sessions that were held in each project. The questionnaires included four scales that measured participants' feelings about:

- were the projects empowering (Project Empower)
- their own personal levels of empowerment (Personal Empower)
- their level of external empowerment in the outside world (External Empower)

- the effect project participation may have had on their employability (Employ Empower)

All of the projects were rated very high as regards participants' experiences of empowerment within the projects (see Arrow 1 in Figure 7). However, projects were rated consistently low as regards to participants' experiences of this carrying over into their experience of the world outside the projects (see Arrow 2 in Figure 7).

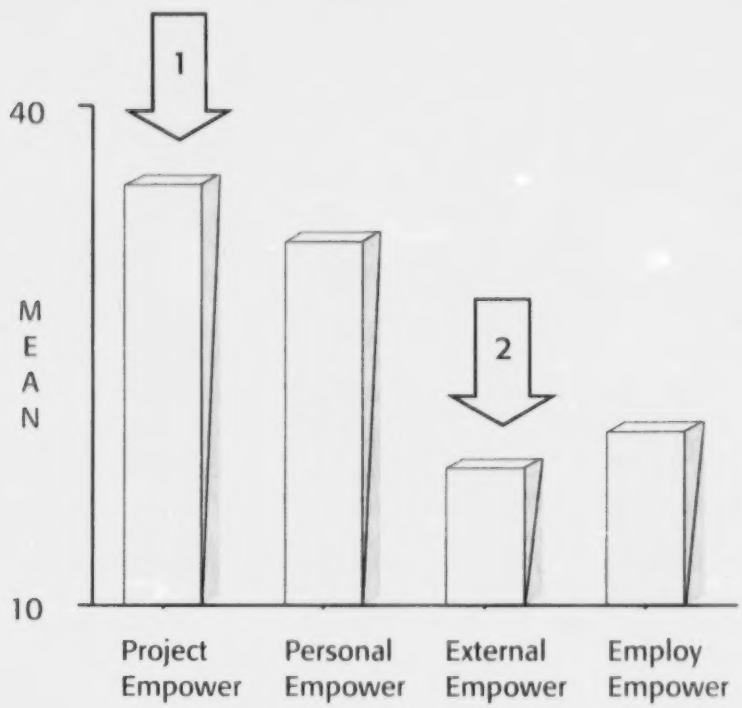

FIGURE 7: SUMMARY OF EMPOWERMENT RATINGS

Why are these two contrasting results being produced so consistently across the five projects - projects that are very different from each other in how they operate and in terms of their participant profile? The results of the focus group sessions help to clarify these issues.

It was evident from their hesitation and uncertainty that for many participants the focus group session was the first time that they were given the chance to personally attempt an understanding of what empowerment meant to them. More generally, for most participants taking part in the project was their first experience of having a professional listen to them or to take an interest in them as individuals:

...we know now that someone will listen to us, they're not just going to walk out when we start talking.

They now had the opportunity to take part in discussions of their own and other participants' difficulties, realising that they could speak and be listened to in turn:

We wouldn't dream of coming in and talking where there was a crowd of people walking in, you know, before we got involved here. It wouldn't be able to take any effect on us now.

Value was also placed on the two-way nature of their relationship with professionals in that they felt part of an ongoing conversation rather than just being talked at:

...they treat you like an equal, they're not standing over you saying you've got to do this....You get a lot of you know, she puts ideas on people, you know, that way. And you mightn't want to listen but then when you go home you might think of something, somebody will have to been saying to you that might work for you and could make things easier for you. That helps.

Lives that are limited by marginalisation and exclusion offer little chance to have or even voice a personal choice. It is clear that being invited to take part in a programme and being given the chance to choose to participate is in itself empowering:

Being asked will you come tomorrow night and I came.

Choice is also seen in the context of lack of coercion. The freedom to participate reinforces the desire for self-improvement:

Basically taking part, everything we're doing 'cause we want to do, not being told to do, and [the project] has given us a chance to do it.

Experiencing some level of respect from a professional was also a factor in participants feeling that the projects were empowering: over 79 percent of participants agreed with the statement that: *Since joining this project my opinions are listened to and respected more than before* (see Table 7 in Annex 1).

All of the above factors were found in all five projects to greatly different degrees. However, the relative levels of listening, choice or respect that the participants experienced in the projects does not appear to make any

difference to the empowerment rating that they give their projects. They also saw empowerment as being given the opportunity to realise and explore a growing sense of their own self-worth. For excluded people this is an issue of particular importance and is linked to the previous concepts of listening, choice and respect:

> *Giving people like, say you're giving them the ability to do things, you're empowering them. Like they have the ability to do it but you're giving them that little bit more so they know they are empowered.*
>
> *Self-confidence.*
>
> *I suppose the ability to believe in yourself.*
>
> *It's about being wanted, and confidence and I felt much better than I did before I started like...*
>
> *I think confidence really is one of the main things...*

Participants' sense of growing self value can be seen in that 86 percent of participants agreed with the statement that: *Since joining this project I feel better about myself* (see Table 8 in Annex 1). This growing sense of self-worth when combined with the support they get from the other participants helps them to deal with the scale of the problems to be faced:

> *...there's only two out of my class that doesn't take drugs and I'd say there's a good eleven of them dead. You know, my whole class, out of 36 people.*
>
> *Well we all kind of have to say; "we're all in the one situation". ...we all kind of got together, through that.*

All participants were trying to gain some level of control over lives that are difficult or in some cases chaotic and to create the possibility of a more secure future:

> *Well it means something different for everybody but for me it means em ... being in control of your life, being able to do what you want, and going out there and getting what you want for your future, that's empowerment for me.*
>
> *To get power over your own life is it not?*
>
> *Equipping yourself with the power to make choices and decisions.*

You have control over something then as well. What you see and what you do in the project.

Again, the process of listening is important here: both being listened to and listening to the stories and experiences being shared by people living similar lives. That participants were succeeding in gaining at least a sense of control over their lives within the context of the projects can be seen in that over 83 percent of participants agreed with the statement that: *Since joining this project I can cope better with the hassles [day to day problems] of life* (see Table 9 in Annex 1).

The gaining of skills was seen by some participants as being empowering:

It does improve your confidence knowing that you know.

Learning more out of it and getting skills you didn't know when you came into it.

This is a minority view as only 44 percent of the participants agree with the statement that: *Since joining this project the most important skills I have learnt are job related* (see Table 10 in Annex 1). Moreover, of those participants who agreed with the statement, the majority (68.4 percent) are in projects that are mainly training based (see Table 11 in Annex 1). In these cases empowerment has been put into practice as training.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS - EMPOWERMENT EXPERIENCES

A series of questions was asked in the focus groups to explore how participants experienced empowerment, that is, how it was put into practice by the projects. The results support the position, as outlined earlier in the project staff section, that the processes used to identify participant groups and to develop the projects were positivist in nature. That is there was little or no consultation with the participants before start-up.

However, a minority did indicate that target group opinion had been looked for:

All of [the promoting organisation's] affiliated groups were contacted and consulted either by phone, writing or visits to groups. The groups were asked what they needed to enhance their groups and members.

Participants' relationships with the professionals are of importance to their experience of empowerment practice. Some participants would see their relative positions in a positive light. However, many felt that there would

always be a distance, a them and us situation, especially where no project staff were members of the excluded group:

Respondent 1	*They treat us as members anyway.*
Interviewer	*Would you say they go as far as to treat you as partners?*
Respondent 2	*Yes.*
Respondent 3	*No.*
Interviewer	*And what would you say that is about it that they don't treat you as a partner?*
Respondent 3	*Cause we're [members of an excluded group] like, I don't think they'd actually make us partners in it.*

This last quote shows the difficulty in being truly inclusive for projects that are promoted and run by people who are not members of the target group and who do not take a participant lead approach.

The participants attach importance to establishing relationships based on mutual respect:

> *I think it's just respect. I think it's just a lot of respect for each other and that we respect like the place and get on well with the staff...*

These relationships can also develop over time reflecting growing levels of trust and personal empowerment within the projects:

> *Well the review, when the one-to-one started it was kind of telling you what you should do kind of thing, now it's a case of us telling them what we want to do so I don't have to take no shit so it's kind of changed for me.*
>
> *Everybody trusts one another.*
>
> *... we'd be able to share what we were after been working on ... so we were learning from one another as well. So we weren't talking about [problems] all the time.*

Contrasts were made between the experience of doing more traditional courses and the impact of the outcome of a project that was empowerment based:

> *... we done self-development courses and I have to say I never got anything out of them. They done nothing for me, I'd come back the same way. I wouldn't feel any better about myself, never felt any more confident but I mean I got a hell of a lot more out of [this project].*

Furthermore, the outcomes gained are not restricted to the project participants themselves:

> *I got plenty out of it but my kids got a lot out of it because of me. I have to say my kids got a lot. It's the first time I've ever said but I really have to say my kids got a lot out of this group even though they don't participate.*

The level of monitoring or ongoing assessment within the projects varied greatly from the minority case of weekly one-to-one in-depth sessions to the more general case of an informal unscheduled process:

Interviewer	*You were saying that they would ask you how you're getting on, is that something that is done on a regular basis?*
Respondent 1	*Every few weeks or so.*
Respondent 2	*Every few weeks.*

This, however, leads back to the anomaly of the high empowerment rating that was given for all the projects despite the differences in practice between them. All participants rated their level of assessment equally highly as over 90 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that: *The project checks to see that I am ok and happy with what I am doing* (see Table 12 in Annex 1).

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS - EXTERNAL EMPOWERMENT CONCEPTS AND EXPERIENCES

In order to examine how participants' experiences outside the projects affect their concepts of empowerment and its practice, a number of issues were explored. These centred on participants' experiences with family or friends and their experiences with state services such as *the welfare,* social workers, and the justice system.

The changes in people's self-worth and confidence due to their participation in the projects were significant. The respect and acceptance that participants experienced in the projects enabled them to face and begin to deal with their individual and community plight in a mutually supportive atmosphere:

> *For four weeks I sat there and I did nothing. For the next two weeks like, I remember the fifth week I cried from the time I went in to the time I went home, I cried. Now she (the project manager) never said anything to me, I just cried. And on the last week I was yapping ninety telling her everything. I don't think I even got a chance to breathe you know.*

The significance of these changes is reflected in how their families reacted to these changes:

> *... when I was finished I remember going back and saying to Y, that's my sister, "you know that's finished" [the project pilot] and she said, wait till I tell you, "we'll pay, get her back find out where she comes from and we'll pay". I mean she could see the difference.*

The positive support of their families was important to participants. However, this support was not always there:

Interviewer: *Did anyone find any resistance?*
Respondent: *Slightly maybe from one particular sister saying that I was wasting my time going [to the project], and certainly from some of my friends...*

Nor was support to be always found in their local communities:

> *You know people, when they don't know about something they fear it you know. Still, an awful lot of people don't know that we have achieved, the book ...Like we gave invitations for the launch of the thing and not one turned up for it...*

There was also envy at what people perceived were the opportunities available to the participants. One participant quoted the example of a single acquaintance who wanted to borrow a child so that she could get on a lone parents course.

The majority of respondents felt that in dealing with the state their experience in the project of having the freedom of choice in how their lives would develop was taken away, that it was a difficult and disempowering experience. They are given little credit for the efforts and sacrifices they are making in attempting to improve their lives:

> *I was telling some of them this story that I was in the Social Welfare office signing on and I told the woman inside that I was actually going back to college in September and she said "what are you doing" and she seemed very interested. ... Suddenly her last statement to me was [legalistic tone] "are you available for and looking for work". So I said [ironic tone] whoops a daisy, so I was off applying for jobs and I had applied for this job this job and this job, so far. And I turned my back on her so she couldn't see I, how embarrassed I felt and she said "I'm sorry but we have to say that to people".*

In this case an inflexible process was inflicting embarrassment and hurt on both of the people involved and showing disrespect for the participant. With reference to the importance of shared respect it is clear from this and other statements that participants feel that they experience little respect in their dealings with state organisations.

There is a difference in how the participants experience respect inside and outside the projects. When asked the question: *since joining this project my opinions are listened to and respected more than before* over 79 percent said that they were. However, when asked: *since joining this project people outside the project show me more respect* only 46.5 percent said yes (see Tables 7 and 13 in Annex 1).

Participants felt that they were gaining some measure of control over their lives through taking part in the projects. However, the state is still trying to maintain its control over them or at least to hold back their personal efforts at empowerment, even if it is doing so impersonally. This can be seen where policies within the welfare system are causing financial difficulties for some participants to the point where being part of a project is actually reducing or endangering their payments:

> *...if you tell them you're not available for work they'll put you off. Like you can explain to them all you want like but you can't get through to them they'll just cut you off straight away. ... Which is unnecessary hassle, it's crazy that.*

There were some gains however; some participants learnt that they can deal with state officials a bit better since participating in their projects:

Respondent 1	*Not that you would deal with them differently, you can speak to them better.*
Respondent 2	*I never asked questions before.*
Respondent 3	*Cause you know what you're speaking about.*

How participants' needs are assessed by professionals outside the projects, whether representing the state or not, and indeed how they themselves are assessed or judged is difficult and disempowering for participants. Participants' feel that these assessments are based on professionals' opinions only, without even the possibility of discussion. If professionals fail to inform themselves on local community initiatives then this could result in the undermining of personal or community action:

> *...like we're on a FÁS course and we come down every Friday [to do follow-on work from the project] and our boss doesn't even know [what we are doing], I don't think she even cares...*

The school know that her father is in recovery. ... She assumed that he had hurt the child deliberately ... I was called to the school and the head nun was reading me out this thing and I hadn't a clue what she was talking about ... she was reporting me to the social ... I had to get to face the social workers. ... She [the social worker] realised that the kids were in no danger but never wrote to tell me that the child was never put on this at risk list. My whole fear was that they were going to take the kids off me...

This participant had been involved over a number of years in her community and yet the professionals involved in this incident seem to have ignored her right not only to a transparent process but also her efforts on behalf of her community.

The participants felt that members of any excluded group such as themselves are pre-judged and automatically found guilty. Their treatment by the state also reflects the relative positions of those involved. In the projects there was at least some evidence of inclusion. However, in their experiences of the realities of the outside world there is no doubt as to the dependent position in which excluded people are placed.

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS – CONCLUSIONS

EMPOWERMENT CONCEPTS

Participants' concepts of empowerment are somewhat uncertain and related to their individual experience of how empowerment was practiced within their own particular project. The following phrases come from the focus group sessions and reflect participants' concerns and ideas about empowerment, in their own words:

Choice	*Taking part because we want to, not because told to. Equipping yourself with the power to make choices and decisions.*
Development	*Self-confidence. Self-belief. Control over your life. Learning and getting skills.*
Respect	*Someone will listen to us. I think its just respect. About being wanted.*
Negative	*Haven't a clue. I don't think they'd actually make us partners in it. May not be a nice word as could mean power over you.*

Analysis of the information supplied by the questionnaire showed that all of the projects were rated highly as regards participants' experiences of

empowerment within the projects. This result seems at first contradictory as the projects are so different from each other in how they are run, their target group, and so on. However, when this result was examined in more depth in the focus groups the reasons for this became clearer.

The relationship between the participants and the professionals in the projects is the key. For people experiencing exclusion the experience of having a professional listen to them constructively, that is, taking on board what they are saying and then acting on the information supplied was in itself an empowering experience. This was being rated as such, especially as they had little or no preconceptions or knowledge of empowerment before joining the projects. Moreover, from all the information collected on this issue it is clear that the better the professionals and the participants communicate, and the more this communication results in positive action, the more empowering, inclusive and effective the projects are rated.

Another factor is the growing sense of self-worth and self-belief that came from both the professional listening and from the speaking and listening to other participants.

EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE

For the majority of projects the practice of empowerment as experienced by participants did not follow the ideals outlined in the professionals' interviews but was driven by more pragmatic day-to-day project necessities. This was also seen in the professionals' interviews. Extra difficulties were also reported in projects where none of the staff were themselves members of the target group.

However, the anomaly regarding all of the projects having similar ratings reappears here also in that questions relating to project practice gave equally high empowerment ratings to each project despite the obvious differences in their practice. This anomaly is again linked to the professionals listening and paying heed to participants.

DEALING WITH THE STATE

Participants' dealings with the state are often difficult, embarrassing, threatening and disempowering. The negative experiences may be related, in some cases, to prejudice but are mostly due to public servants being poorly trained or informed, over reliant on their own perceived expertise and lacking adequate communication skills. On the positive side some participants felt empowered to the point that they could now speak out on their own behalf putting their own points of view or asking questions as they now had knowledge and confidence.

Participants are evolving or progressing through being part of an empowerment process but the official world has not changed. Not only has the official world failed to change but it is also failing to acknowledge the efforts individual participants are making to deal with and resolve both personal and community problems.

Excluded people are assessed normatively, that is, many state professionals in common with some project professionals look only to what they have learned through the discipline that they trained in or to their own work experience for their answers and undervalue or ignore the expertise of their clients.

This theme of external empowerment generated a clear reaction in the focus groups. The overall impression obtained is that participants see a need for empowerment and educational programmes to be given on a wider scale and especially for professionals and civil servants who deal with excluded groups and individuals on a regular basis. One participant after relating yet another incident of automatic official suspicion declared that it occurred to him that whereas he was empowered the official in question was not. Then after some reflection he offered the thought that maybe that official also needed empowerment.

CONCLUSIONS

The practice of empowerment in the projects as presented by project staff and participants is influenced by four factors: the disciplinary backgrounds of the project managers; the constraints of operating within the timescale and objectives of the Integra Initiative (a short project duration of two years and a priority on labour market outcomes); the nature of the promoting organisation; and the circumstances and needs of the target group of the project. While all project staff sought to pursue an empowerment strategy, the nature of the empowerment practices implemented varied across projects. In terms of the models of project process presented in this chapter, projects generally aspired to a level of practice at least consistent with the interpretive perspective on empowerment and, in some cases, to incorporate practices associated with the critical perspective on empowerment.

Project participants became involved in projects mainly with a view to gaining or regaining control over their lives. Despite the variation in empowerment practices across the five projects, participants' experiences of empowerment were similar and mainly confined to three areas. The most important of these areas was that project staff actually listened to them and valued their experiences. Second, participants were given an opportunity to discover and voice their own choices regarding how their lives would

develop and their choices were respected and actioned. Third, as a consequence of being shown respect as individuals - regardless of any ongoing difficulties they were experiencing - participants experienced a growing sense of self-worth and confidence.

The experience of empowerment was mainly confined to the sphere of the project. Although some participants found that they could interact more effectively with the official world, the majority of participants felt disempowered in their dealings with state institutions. Thus, while participants are changing and developing there was no corresponding change in the manner in which state institutions treated them.

WORKING TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

EMPOWERMENT: THEORY AND PRACTICE

The analysis of empowerment presented here has shown that it is only when empowerment is understood as a strategy that involves placing people experiencing social exclusion at the centre of and directing actions to combat their exclusion that a common citizenship will be achieved. When people experiencing social exclusion are left outside of the policy-making process and when institutions and projects make decisions on their behalf - exercise power over them - what results is a limited form of citizenship. When the needs and views of people experiencing social exclusion are represented in the policy-making process by organisations working on the issue of social exclusion, the result is negotiated citizenship.

The analysis also showed that three broad perspectives on empowerment and its relationship to citizenship are found in the academic and policy-oriented literature - the positivist, the interpretive and the critical. In addition to these three perspectives there is a variety of more disciplinary grounded understandings of empowerment. These perspectives and disciplinary understandings are found to varying degrees in current practices at national policy-making level and in the micro processes of project design and implementation.

Currently, at the level of national policy-making processes and at the level of project design and implementation the most prevalent view of empowerment is based on what is described as the interpretive perspective. This perspective emphasises the role of dialogue between people experiencing exclusion and policy-makers in the shaping of policies to combat social exclusion. The institutional dimension of this perspective is found in the national partnership approach to policy-making in which the voice and needs of people experiencing social exclusion are represented through the participation of non-governmental organisations. The critical weaknesses of this perspective were identified as its lack of attention to the issue of the inequalities in power between the parties concerned and the gifting of power in the establishment of the arrangements for policy-making.

The practice of empowerment was varied at the level of individual projects, with this variation being influenced by the disciplinary background of project staff as well as by the extent of pragmatic adjustment that prevailed in implementing an empowerment strategy. In practical terms, the nature of and extent to which project processes of design, implementation, and review actually facilitated participants to exercise power and to articulate their felt needs was varied. However, all projects actively listened to the voices of their participants and facilitated participants to draw on their indigenous knowledge of social exclusion as a resource to shape project decision-

making. It is this listening that was central to participant's experiences of empowerment within their projects. In effect, for many participants, the project was their first experience of having some power, of having people listen to their voice and their understanding of their situation and needs, and of action being decided and taken on this basis. Empowerment within projects also extended to participants playing an active role in the determination of project actions.

The critical perspective on empowerment emphasises the effects of the unequal distribution of power in society and the consequences of this in terms of the limitations it places on the level of citizenship available to people experiencing social exclusion. In doing this it draws attention to the need for people experiencing exclusion to be facilitated to exercise power in the shaping of decisions that affect their lives. These decisions arise in the context of the design and implementation of projects and in respect of national policy. The critical perspective places empowerment clearly within the arena of politics and of the institutions that are in place that enable or prevent people from exercising their voice in the process of policy-making. In doing this it challenges current practices at national and project level. At national level there is the challenge of the effective disenfranchisement of a large number of citizens. Many of these citizens are people experiencing social exclusion, an exclusion at the heart of which is the absence of an effective framework of social rights to enable all citizens to claim and exercise their civil rights. At project level there is the challenge of ensuring that the micro-processes of project design and delivery place the felt needs and the voice of people experiencing social exclusion centre stage. This, however, is not sufficient to bridge the gap between the empowerment that results within the sphere of the project and the exercise of power in the public sphere. For that to be achieved projects need to facilitate participants to be empowered within the public sphere. This requires a focus not just on facilitating change in participants and their personal lives but also on social and institutional change.

THE RELEVANCE OF EMPOWERMENT TO ACHIEVING INCLUSION

Empowerment is relevant to achieving inclusion because it recognises that a common feature of the lives of people experiencing social exclusion is their lack of power. This lack of power is manifested in their day-to-day lives by not having choices and options regarding where and how one lives, through to the lack of power to participate in and influence decisions regarding how society is organised and resources are distributed. Lack of power both in the private sphere of ones life and in the public sphere of society equates to a denial or at least a weakening of citizenship with adverse consequences not just for the individuals concerned but for society as a whole.

Achieving inclusion will mean addressing inequalities in power between different people and between people and social and economic institutions. Empowerment is seen as relevant to achieving solidarity, equality and inclusion in society because it places an emphasis on enabling people to claim their full rights as citizens. Projects that use empowerment as a strategy to combat inequality and social exclusion place an emphasis on participants' total situation in society and on enabling people to become actively involved in pursuing their choices and voicing their opinions. In the words of C. Wright Mills (1967) empowerment in such projects provides the link between personal biography and public issues. In this manner empowerment seeks to bring about outcomes that are wider than can be achieved solely by vocational training or employment supports. More generally, empowerment contributes to the achievement of social as well as economic objectives.

PUTTING EMPOWERMENT INTO PRACTICE

An important aspect of empowerment as a strategy to secure solidarity, equality and inclusion is recognising that power cannot be given. Working in an empowering way requires working to create structures and situations in which people can claim power and enabling people to exercise power. The latter requires addressing barriers to the acquisition and exercise of power including the lack of resources, information and confidence. At a practical level, projects that put empowerment into practice break down pre-existing inequalities of power between project personnel and project participants. Such projects strive to work in an environment of equality, in an environment in which the voice and choice of all persons is equal, in which all hold a common citizenship.

Putting empowerment into practice will require ensuring that the beneficiaries of projects are seen not as the objects of project actions but as the subjects or authors of project actions. It will involve challenging deep-rooted assumptions and practices regarding professional practice and the view that professionals know best what is required. In order to develop projects that are empowering it will be necessary to ensure that people experiencing inequality and discrimination - people without power - are provided with the conditions and enabled to have a voice in determining what the project will do. In this regard also, it is important to recognise that empowerment is not just a point of departure in the life of a project but is also a point of arrival. It is a point of arrival because it is through and as a result of a project that people (participants) will exercise power and seek to claim their common citizenship.

Finally, an important point of departure in putting empowerment into practice is recognising that people experiencing social exclusion - project participants - are not helpless victims of circumstance but rather are social actors with the capacity to identify, challenge and change the circumstances leading to their powerlessness and exclusion. Putting empowerment into practice involves mobilising the insights and capacities of people experiencing social exclusion and using them as a resource to promote solidarity, equality and inclusion.

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ANNEX 1
TABLES

Table 1: **POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

Table 1	Frequency	% of Integra Population	% of 5 Projects Population
Integra Population	391	100.0%	
5 Projects Population	99	25.0%	
5 Projects Sample	43	11.0%	43.0%

Table 2: **GENDER BALANCE**

Table 2	Sample		5 Projects		30 Projects	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Male	11	25.6	26	26.3	138	35.0
Female	32	74.4	73	73.7	253	65.0
Total	43	100.0	99	100.0	391	100.0

Table 3: **AGE RANGE**

Table 3	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
No Response	2	4.7
Under 25	17	44.2
Under 35	11	69.8
Under 45	5	81.4
Under 60	8	100.0
Total	43	

Table 4: **NUMBER OF CHILDREN**

Table 4	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
None	15	34.9
Less than 4	20	81.4
Less than 8	6	95.3
More than 16	2	100.0
Total	43	

TABLE 5: **CHILDREN LIVING AT HOME**

Table 5

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	26	60.5
No	17	39.5
Total	43	100.0

Table 6:
EDUCATION LEVEL ACHIEVED

Table 6

		Education Level Achieved			
		NFQ[a]	Junior Cycle	Senior Cycle	Return to Education
Age Range	No Response	2			
	15 - 19	6	2		
	20 - 24	6	1	2	
	25 - 29	3	1	1	1
	30 - 34	3		2	
	35 - 39	3			1
	40 - 44			1	
	45 - 49	4			
	50 - 54	1			
	55 - 59	2		1	
Total		30	4	7	2

[a] No Formal Qualification

Table 7: **RESPECT IN PROJECT**

Table 7

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	4.7
Neutral	7	16.3
Agree	34	79.1
Total	43	100.0

Table 8: **SELF WORTH**

Table 8

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	4.7
Neutral	4	9.3
Agree	37	86.0
Total	43	100.0

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Table 9: **LIFE**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	4.7
Neutral	5	11.6
Agree	36	83.7
Total	43	100.0

Table 10: **SKILLS**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	13	30.2
Neutral	11	25.6
Agree	19	44.2
Total	43	100.0

Table 11: **TRAINING**

		Since joining this project the most important skills I have learnt are job related		
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Projects	Mainly participant lead projects	53.8%	100.0%	31.6%
	Mainly training based projects	46.2%		68.4%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 12: **ASSESSMENT**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	2.3
Neutral	3	7.0
Agree	39	90.7
Total	43	100.0

Table 13: **EXTERNAL RESPECT**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	4	9.3
Neutral	19	44.2
Agree	20	46.5
Total	43	100.0

ANNEX 2
CHARTS

CHART 1: REASONS FOR LEAVING SCHOOL

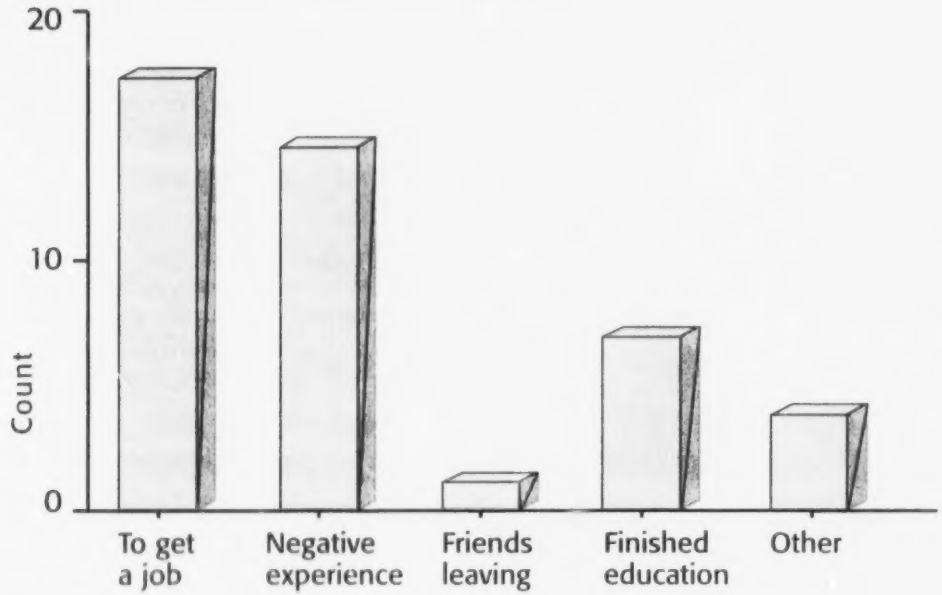
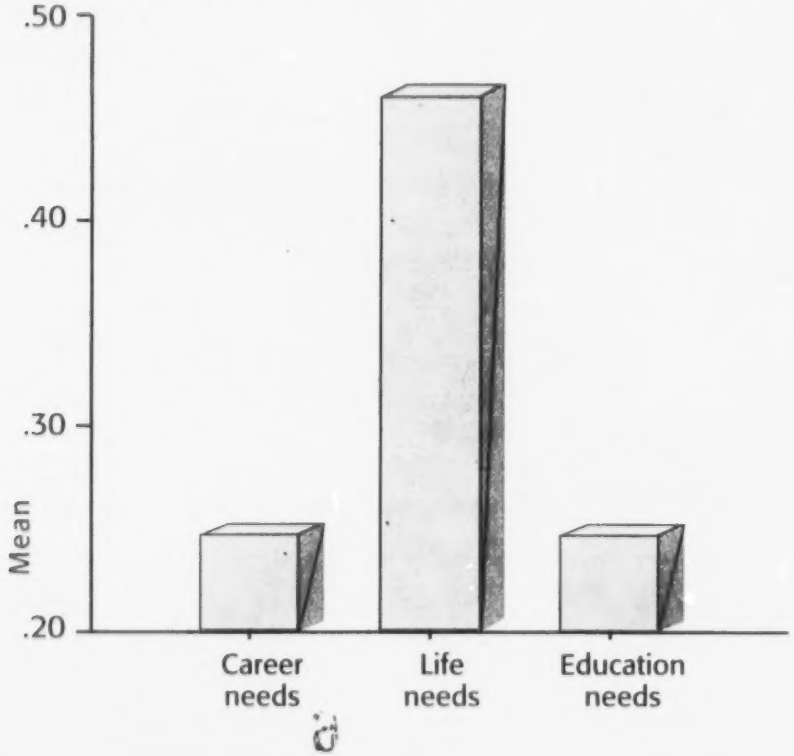


CHART 2: REASONS FOR JOINING PROJECT



ANNEX 3
PROJECT OUTLINES

THE FAMILY PROJECT

The EU Integra Family Project works with families affected by heroin use and related health issues, against a background of continuing social exclusion. The project includes people who live with the direct consequences of drug use in their family or neighbourhood, community activists and other concerned organisations.

The Aims of the Family Project

The Project aimed to devise and implement interventions to break the cycle of compounded deprivation for families and communities caught up in the cycle of heroin, HIV, Hepatitis and social exclusion. An important element of the project was to enable participants to articulate their own analysis of social exclusion.

The link between social exclusion and heroin use is well established. The south inner city is one of the worst affected parts of Dublin. Many and specific prevention and education measures are yet to be put in place.

The Participants

The participant groups emerged from the previous European social exclusion project that Community Response carried out. All were involved at the project development phase of this Integra project and so were engaged, at some level, in the design of the project. The project included people who live with the direct consequences of drug use in their family or neighbourhood, community activists and other concerned organisations, in the south-west inner city.

The Actions

The project produced health information that is culturally appropriate on: family support needs; family issues, in relation to drug use; methadone - from the partners of drug users perspective; material on Hepatitis C. Other actions included inter-agency work and some needs have been identified such as ante and post-natal care of drug using women; integration of women's health and childcare policies with drugs policy. Publications, plays and videos were used to support these activities.

A Family Conference was jointly held with the Dublin CityWide Drugs Crisis Campaign, in October 1999.

What Has Been Learned From Family Project?

Accessible events, like the community plays, 'Taking Liberties' and 'Touching On', which explore major social themes, are important cultural expressions.

Audiences have a shared 'community conversation' that opens up the possibility for action.

To collectively express cultural identity, to reflect authentic experiences and to voice their own story, people must be central to the entire process. The Project collaborates with general health services and a generic family centre to examine responses to heroin use, community and family health. These actions demonstrate a need for further capacity building.

The Family Project has, with local people, designed actions to produce material that is relevant to local communities. People identifying their own needs and producing their own material is an effective first step to community health and well being. Drug users, and women especially, should have their needs met within 'user friendly' general health services and in neighbourhood family centres.

The implications of Hepatitis C for drug users and their families are serious. A community health framework and a family oriented approach, integrating education and treatment, would inform a progressive practice model.

Policy Outcomes

The Family Project, working with people in communities where heroin use and social, economic and cultural exclusion have been the norm for generations and recognising the strength of these families and these communities, endeavours to move towards the goal of health and well being for all, through empowerment strategies and towards a new community health model.

The Family Project, the Coomb Women's Hospital (maternity), an Eastern Health Board Public Health nurse, a Community Worker and the Mercy Family Resource Centre are together analysing the ante and post-natal needs of pregnant drug users. Policy and professional practice is being explored and all research, discussions and conclusions will be documented.

Products From the Family Project

- 'Taking Liberties - Taking Action' - A Video and Manual
- 'Touching On' - A play
- Hepatitis C educational audiotape
- An Information Booklet on Methadone entitled 'The Ups and Downs of Molly Phy'.
- A comic book entitled 'Ring-a-Ring-a-Rosie' illustrating the issues around drug abuse in the home.

Conclusions

A 'bottom-up' community health model is needed and a framework which integrates drug treatment, education and prevention. Practice models that address the dynamic interaction between health, heroin use and social exclusion need to be formulated. Interventions are still medically led. Community Response suggest a community health model, with Community Drugs/Health Teams (CDT's)

Without effective national policy and with no preventative measures or education programmes in place, there is serious concern about Hepatitis C. That concern is shared city-wide and is reflected in European research. In the context of drug use in Dublin, Community Response believes that huge health and social implications need to be faced. Achieving social inclusion must be part of a dynamic and imaginative community health strategy.

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) 1998 report suggests future trends moving from a 'demand reduction' strategy to a general health response. Community Drugs and Health Teams, focused on drug use and family health, should be established. As a priority, these community-based teams would act as a local liaison structure in an integrated service delivery plan.

We need flexible responses at institutional level and in the allocation of resources.

MOVING ON UP

Moving On Up was developed through an extensive locally based consultation process which included dissemination of a structured questionnaire to over 60 lone parent self help groups operating at a local level and regional workshops in Limerick, Galway and Dublin. This followed a growing awareness by One Parent Exchange Network (OPEN), the promoting organisation, for the need to provide training that met the identified needs of the group.

The Aims of Moving On Up

Moving On Up aimed to: enhance the development and capacity of the Network and its member groups; pilot an initiative to provide unpaid leaders in member groups with the skills to secure paid employment in their groups; promote policy and provision changes to policymakers and the social partners who support lone parents to remain in employment and reach their full potential; develop a training model of good practice which will demonstrate how a nationally applicable framework can be adapted to suit local circumstances.

The Participants

Some 45 lone parents actually benefited from the training delivered as part of Moving On Up. Given the geographical spread of the delivery sites (Dublin, Tralee, Athlone, Galway plus some distance learning), the programme did indeed manage to deliver on its desire to ensure that OPEN as a national network penetrated Ireland so as to reach as many lone parent groups as possible.

The Actions

The key project actions identified to achieve the above stated objectives were: develop and deliver training to lone parents and lone parent groups, including leaders/managers of such groups; devise and disseminate a 'Group Kit' - information pack for lone parents self help groups; promote lone parent family friendly policies to policymakers and social partners - including commissioning research on family friendly employment policies, with an emphasis on large retail sector in member states; organise a national seminar with social partners, policymakers and other decision makers on labour market issues for lone parents; deliver a transnational work plan which provides added value to the national project.

Achievements and Outcomes of Moving On Up

The provision of training opportunities to more than 45 lone parents from lone parent organisations is a key successful element of the training and the

supports provided and application of the training are core factors in this success. OPEN and the members of the network established stronger links with the social partners and other policymakers and decision-makers. This has led to an increased awareness of labour market policy and provision as they affect lone parents.

What Has Been Learned From Moving On Up?

Moving On Up developed a programme under the 'Empowerment' theme. This programme provides participants with training that includes group dynamics; facilitation skills; and group organisational theory to support the trainees to deliver the 'Group Kit' at local level. It also seeks to grow a network of these trainers who will deliver the Kit throughout Ireland.

The effect of this programme has been to reduce the need for centralised or Dublin based training by OPEN. It will also provide local groups with further skills to enhance their own local work and in turn their contribution within the national Network. This programme recognises a key learning from Moving On Up - that the most effective learning for lone parents (given their economic status and lack of childcare services) is locally based training.

Policy Outcomes

The Project has found that the training and development of unpaid workers in locally based groups is not alone enabling them to secure paid jobs - with beneficial effects for the individuals and groups concerned - but is also providing a demonstration of good practice for other groups active in the community.

Products From Moving On Up

- 'The Group Kit' The Group Kit is an information pack for lone parent self help groups. The Kit was one of the first outputs of the project and was used extensively during the training itself and has been disseminated to lone parent groups all over Ireland - both to established ones and to those who are at set up stage.
- Research Paper on Family Friendly Employment Opportunities

Conclusions

The lack of labour market policies and provision inclusive of lone parents is central to the project and recommendations on such family friendly policies emerged from the project itself and from the research at transnational level.

The model of training piloted which supports lone parents currently working in a voluntary capacity to be upskilled to enable them access paid employment in their local groups is innovative and has targeted lone parent leaders who themselves are socially and economically excluded at local level.

The provision of childcare and transport supports for trainees accompanied by flexible training at times that allows lone parents to access - especially lone parents where they are the sole childcare person in the family - are key success points underlying the participation levels and outcomes of the training.

TARGET

TARGET (Tallaght Area Response Gaining Employment and Training for offenders) works with young offenders with the aim of moving them into education, training or employment. The project is promoted by Deonach West Tallaght Probation Project and supported by FÁS.

The Aims of TARGET

TARGET sought to increase the employment opportunities available to offenders aged 16 to 25 years and promote community-based projects as an alternative to custody and as a more effective means of reducing re-offending. The context and rationale for the project emerged out of the recognition that in the more traditional prescriptive ways of working the needs of this group had not previously been met.

The Participants

The target group for the project are young offenders both men and women (16-25) who live in Tallaght, Dublin. All the participants have been involved with the criminal justice system. Some have spent time in custody; some will have been at risk of doing so. A number of other factors impacted on participants, for example insecure accommodation, poverty, addiction, early school leaving, poor family relationships and experience of violence.

The Actions

The participants developed an innovative programme incorporating keyworking, creative activity, basic education, skills training and physical activity / fitness classes. Short taster courses were provided along with opportunities for individual and group development and discussion.

Achievements and Outcomes of TARGET

The main area of learning for the workers at TARGET has been around the concept of empowerment and its application to the client group. Workers beliefs have been confirmed that as workers they cannot influence participants by telling them what they should do. Only when participants discover for themselves the value of learning, commitment to their own development and mutual respect do they take on responsibility for their own attendance, good participation, and active planning for a more constructive and creative lifestyle and move away from offending.

Products from Target

- RESOURCE PACK - for those wishing to set up a project working from an ethos of empowerment, working with any client group.

- TRAINING SESSION (ONE DAY) - looking at empowerment and its application in practice.
- TRAINING PROGRAMME - 'Promoting anti-racist and inclusive work practices' TARGET is involved in the Integra Working Group producing the training programme.
- EMPOWERMENT BOOKLET

Conclusions

TARGET has secured mainstream funding from the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform and is committed to working with Deonach to provide a comprehensive service that meets the needs of its participants.

TIPPERARY RURAL TRAVELLERS' PROJECT

The project is a partnership of Travellers and settled people working together to build relationships between the Traveller and settled communities through community education, antiracist strategies and other joint development work and was based in Knockanrawley Resource Centre in Tipperary Town.

The Aims of Tipperary Rural Travellers' Project

The overall aim of the Tipperary Rural Travellers' Project is to improve the employability and life-chances of Traveller families in the Tipperary, Cashel, Cahir and Dundrum areas of South Tipperary.

The Participants

There are approximately 30 families living in the area who are involved in the project. The project involves representatives of the Traveller community on the management of the project and in working groups on specific issues.

The Actions

This programme is delivered by the Community Education Trainer and the Travellers who are trained as peer community educators. The work is organised from a community development perspective whereby the work with the Traveller community is on a collective rather than an individual level. The project provides support and resources to the Traveller community, through the organisation of lobbying groups on issues such as accommodation, health and antiracism, and an information service is also provided. The project works with Travellers on foundation and prevocational training. This is carried out in co-operation with other agencies. Course subjects to date have included personal development, childcare, literacy, information technology and carpentry.

Achievements and Outcomes of Tipperary Rural Travellers' Project

The Tipperary Rural Travellers Project worked to improve the employability and life-chances of Traveller families in South Tipperary. The project worked on community education, antiracist strategies and joint development activities.

What has been Learned from Tipperary Rural Travellers' Project?

Training and enterprise set-ups were developed under this programme. There was prevocational personal development and life-skills training which included: childcare; video filming; literacy; training in committee skills and leadership for Traveller representatives; and IT training. Work placements were also obtained. Training in the delivery of a Community Education

programme, which was aimed at service providers and other statutory and voluntary agencies. Training of trainers was also developed. A feasibility study on an equine project was commissioned to take place in September 99. Information sessions on the Control of Horses Act were held in 1998 and 1999. In addition, an information evening was held on the Traveller Accommodation Bill in June 1998. The project also facilitated the election of Traveller representatives to a Traveller Health Committee on the Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee of Tipperary S.R. County Council.

Policy Outcomes

A central feature of the project has been concerned with increasing levels of awareness in the wider community of Traveller culture and history and the discrimination perpetrated against Travellers

Products from Tipperary Rural Travellers' Project

- Video on Traveller Lives
- Antiracism Conference Report
- Community Education Pack
- Joint Community Education Pack as part of Integra Working Group
- Conclusions

In operational terms, the main achievements of the project has been the development of an integrated developmental model for Travellers which takes into account their specific needs for culturally appropriate training and services.

TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The project is piloting a package of preventative and compensatory actions aimed at increasing participation in higher education by people experiencing exclusion as a result of the cycle of unemployment; their social status and/or familial circumstances.

The Aims of Towards Employment Through Technological Education

The project consists of three strands of activities aimed at the following target groups: (1) Long-term unemployed men; - this group is offered opportunities to enhance their education through participation in further education, by providing them with the appropriate foundation skills to access mainstream education. (2) Cross-generational supports (parent/child); this seeks to address the problems of social exclusion across two generations and to combat the negative impact of unemployment on children by providing experiences for parent and child which will develop a positive attitude to education. (3) Targeting of designated disadvantaged schools; this element works with disadvantaged schools with special support systems to enhance their student retention rates and promotes the relevance, opportunities and fulfilment that progression to higher education can achieve for students.

The Participants

The project is targeting three specific groups: long-term unemployed men; adults as learners and young people.

The Actions

Appropriate foundation studies courses for long-term unemployed men.
Complementary educational guidance service.
Exploring education workshops.
Family and school based interventions.

Achievements and Outcomes of Towards Employment Through Technological Education

At participant level, a Foundation Studies Programme for long-term unemployed men has been designed and implemented. The subjects include information technology, communications, mathematics, physics, chemistry, engineering, business management and career guidance. Cross-generational supports were provided and a programme of events was designed and implemented for sixth class primary school children and their parents. The aim of this programme was to introduce primary students and their parents to higher education. Educational guidance workshops were held on campus with parents of children from designated disadvantaged

primary and post primary schools. Research is being undertaken by the project into educational disadvantage in Cork, this research aims to investigate and delineate the attitudes to education which are prevalent among primary and second level children.

What Has Been Learned From Towards Employment Through Technological Education?

Key lessons arising from the project to date are the requirements for: - new forms of access and progression to education; - family based interventions; - multidimensional approaches to addressing two generations of learners; - targeting in the recruitment process and flexibility of approach in the development of training.

Policy Outcomes

The programme is delivered in a client-centred mode that provides for flexibility of timing to suit personal / family responsibilities, informal learning environments in which learners can feel comfortable and participative and flexible learning methods.

Products from Towards Employment through Technological Education

- Exploring Education - Educational Opportunities Centre Newsletter
- Integra Transnational C.A.E.S.A.R.

Conclusions

Up to now actions aimed at widening access for and increasing participation by socio-economically disadvantaged groups have focused on one target group or another. This project provides access to many target groups. It provides access opportunities for both adults and their children, in a process of exploring education. In taking a multidimensional approach which aims to target adults (both as parents and learners) and young people simultaneously, the impact at community level is greatly increased. Special targeting is essential if opportunities are to be extended to communities that are traditionally unrepresented in higher education.

What is the relevance of empowerment to achieving inclusion and securing citizenship?

Drawing on critical social theory a framework linking concepts of empowerment with those of citizenship is developed. Within this framework three levels of citizenship are identified - **limited**, **negotiated** and **common**. It is argued that current policy and practice to combat exclusion in Ireland is predominantly concerned with achieving **negotiated** citizenship. It is further argued that inclusion will only be achieved when people who are currently experiencing exclusion are facilitated to shape policies and practices to combat exclusion and to secure **common** citizenship. This demands not just a focus on individual empowerment but also on institutional and social change.

Using the framework developed, the concept and practice of empowerment in the five Integra projects that comprise the Irish Empowerment Working Group is examined. The research findings show that there are diverse understandings and practices associated with empowerment and points to the gap that can exist between ideal concept and pragmatic practice. The research findings also demonstrate that those projects that use a concept and practice of empowerment that enables participants to access and utilise their own knowledge and experience can develop resources to overcome exclusion.

It is concluded that for projects - and by implication policies - to contribute to achieving inclusion, actions must be informed by a concept of empowerment that ensures that participants are given the opportunity to be active subjects rather than being treated as the passive recipients of interventions.

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